**BCM Bible Study: March 25/26, 2020**

**Matthew 5:1-16: The Beatitudes – A Distinct Community**

Getting Started (15 minutes)

* Start by introducing yourself and giving others an opportunity to do the same. You could ask them to share a variety of things about themselves (major, hometown, etc.), but consider including one of the following:
  + Ask them to share why they decided to join a BCM family
  + Ask them to share what they are hoping to get out of being in a family group
* Take a minute to set the tone for the semester. Communicate your personal goals and hopes for them as a group and as individuals. This is a good opportunity to set the bar high for attendance and commitment. You can say something like “My hope is that everyone will prioritize this time together each week, because I think the more consistent everyone is, the better we get to know one another, and the more we will grow together.” Be excited – that is infectious!

Introduction

The Gospel of Matthew presents Jesus as a second Moses. Like Moses, Jesus avoided a slaughter of infants, came out of Egypt, and wandered the desert. In Matthew 4, after overcoming temptation, he sets out to begin his public ministry and he does so by calling his first disciples. Then, like Moses, Jesus climbs up a mountain. But unlike Moses, Jesus will not receive a law, but instead he will a sort of “law”/guidelines to Christian living.

The Sermon on the Mount is an address to Jesus’ disciples. He calls them away from the crowds and gives a guide to living life with Jesus as our king. To obey the commandments of the Sermon is to live like Christ. Sometimes these statements feel impossible and out of our reach, but that does not mean we should not strive for them. God’s grace means that we cannot earn God’s favor, but it also empowers us to finally live an abundant life. The Sermon describes that life; it embodies God’s intent for mankind.

The Beatitudes: **Read Matthew 5:1-10**

* The Sermon begins with 8 “beatitudes,” each of which begins with “blessed are…” What does it mean to be “blessed”? Wo do you normally consider to be blessed?
  + The essence of the meaning is basically that the person described in each beatitude is in a good, enviable situation. It could be translated “Fortunate are…” or “Congratulations to…”
  + Why are the beatitudes surprising and countercultural?
* The beatitudes describe the character and qualities of God’s people. We are called to be meek, poor in spirit, merciful, etc. This kind of life will be notably different than society at large.
  + In what way do the beatitudes challenge you to grow? Which one is most challenging to you? Why?
  + Have you experienced any of these qualities in your walk with Christ? In what way is this way of living different than those who don’t seek to follow Christ?
  + Why is the second half of each beatitude important?
* Leaders, feel free to focus on any of the beatitudes you see fit. I have given some questions for 3 and 4 as examples. As certain ones are discussed in your study, try to figure out why it is a blessing to be that way? How could I live this out? How does the second half of the beatitude enable us to persevere in difficulty?
  + Verse 3 – What does it mean to be “poor in spirit”?
    - This is a person who is faithful to God and not wrapped in arrogant self-confidence. To be poor in spirit is to be humbly dependent on God for all things.
      * In what ways/areas of life are you tempted to treat God as irrelevant?
      * Why is it so difficult for us to admit our spiritual poverty?
  + Verse 4 – What typically causes you to mourn?
    - Why would those who are poor in spirit feel a need to mourn?
    - How has God redeemed the season of mourning in your life?

Salt and Light: **Read Matthew 5:11-16**

* Verses 11-12 look and sound like another beatitude, but differ in length and the direct address of “you” rather than “those.” This links these verses to 13-16. What is the overall message/theme of vv.11-16?
* The church is called to be a distinctive community. What two results does Jesus say will result from living in this way? (Persecution and unbelievers glorifying God)
  + Have you ever experienced any sort of persecution for your faith?
  + Jesus tells you to “rejoice and be glad” (v.12) in the midst of these things. Why should we do that? What does persecution indicate for us?
* Before refrigeration, salt was used as a preservative to keep meat from rotting. What does this tell you about the church’s role in society? What does it look like to be salt?
  + In what way do you see the world “rotting”?
  + What are some ways you can function as “salt” where you live and work?
* What does it mean for the church the be a light? How does this complement its role as salt?
  + When we shine our light, what will be noticeable about us?
  + How can you be a light where you live and work?
* It is not enough to be distinct; we need to be seen by others. In what ways have you seen the church or Christians separate from society?
  + What might cause you to want to hide your light?
  + What does it look like to be both distinct and involved in society?
  + How can we will this out in the current climate of social distancing?
* What is the relationship of the Beatitudes to being salt and light?

Conclusion

Each week, we will offer a challenge to the group and follow up next week. This week, ask people to choose one Beatitude to memorize and strive to embody. Ask them to look for opportunities to let this behavior/mindset serve as salt or light. It is best to ask them to choose the Beatitude in the group and write down everyone’s choice.